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**STUDY TOUTS SUCCESS OF SKATING RINK PROGRAM**

***NEW MODEL OF STEWARDSHIP WORKING – SHOULD BE EXPANDED TO ALL STATE RINKS***

Secretary of Environmental Affairs Stephen R. Pritchard lauded a recent report released by the Pioneer Institute which details the positive impact of the long-term leasing program of skating rinks owned by the Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR). The report highlighted several key benefits the long term-leasing program has brought to these public skating rinks including adding new operating hours, continued affordability, and increased capital investment and improvements to rink facilities.

Secretary Pritchard, said "This unbiased report presents a through and complete analysis of the long-term rink leasing program I encourage all legislators, municipal officials and residents with an interest in the future of their skating rinks to read it. You can't argue with success."

The Pioneer Institute confirmed the fact that rinks operating under a long-term lease are open more hours per day and more months during the year than those operated by DCR. The report says third party rink operators on average keep rinks open for 43 weeks per year while rinks operated by DCR are open at most 34 weeks per year and many much less than that due to facility and equipment age.

The Pioneer report also addresses issues regarding the affordability of rinks under long-term leases. The report confirms that, contrary to a widely held belief, rinks under long-term leases do not arbitrarily inflate fees and as the report states the fees at DCR rinks under long-term lease are some of the least expensive in the state. To raise fees private operators must first discuss the purpose of the fee increase and DCR must approve. If DCR does not approve the fee increase the private operator cannot change any of their rates.

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Additionally the report detailed the significant infusion of capital investments in long-term leased rinks and found that more than \$37 million private dollars have been spent to improve public skating rinks put under long-term leases in 2002. Private operators at many state rinks have kept fees low while invested large amounts of funding to greatly improve the rinks. Several rinks now have new lobbies, new ceilings, refreshed skating surfaces and humidifiers that keep the ice colder allowing the rink to stay open for many more months – in many cases year round.

In order to bring the final 12 rinks not under a long-term lease into the program, the support of the Legislature is required. The Governor submitted his Fiscal-Year 2007 budget proposal with a provision to allow for the long-term leasing of the 12 DCR rinks not yet under long-term-lease. The House will be considering amendments to add these rinks to the long-term leasing program during the current budget debate.

The 12 remaining rinks are:

Bajko Memorial Rink, Hyde Park  
Connell Memorial Rink, Weymouth  
Devine Memorial Rink, Dorchester  
Emmons Horrigan O'Neill Memorial Rink, Charlestown  
Flynn Memorial Rink, Medford  
LoConte Memorial Rink, Medford  
Murphy Memorial Rink, South Boston  
Reilly Memorial Rink, Brighton  
Shea Memorial Rink, Quincy  
Steriti Memorial Rink, Boston  
Veterans Memorial Rink, Somerville  
Ulin Memorial Rink, Milton.

“It is my hope the House & Senate will expand this successful new model of stewardship when it comes before them during budget deliberations,” said DCR Commissioner Stephen H. Burrington. “We want to all our skating rinks to be state-of-the art facilities and for rink users to have a top-notch skating experience,” Burrington added, “and long-term leases are the answer to providing both at no cost to the Commonwealth.

For a copy of the report contact the Pioneer Institute at 617-723-2277 or visit [www.pioneerinstitute.org](http://www.pioneerinstitute.org).

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